

Over 500 Navy Cargo Handlers Deploy to CENTCOM AOR

By Commander Tom Gresback, USNR

Naval Expeditionary Logistics Support Force Public Affairs Office

WILLIAMSBURG, Va. — Over 500 Naval Reservists from the Naval Expeditionary Logistics Support Force (NAVELSF) departed Norfolk, Va., in mid-February for Kuwait and Iraq in support of Operation *Iraqi Freedom II*. The Sailors are a part of what is being called the largest troop rotation since World War II.

NAVELSF assets are being deployed to meet joint military requirements as part of DoD's scheduled force rotation. Since mid-January, members of the NAVELSF have been training at several locations throughout Virginia, using the same type of equipment used on their deployment. The Army is currently fulfilling the joint logistics mission and providing the equipment used in theater. While in the AOR, the Sailors will work side-by-side with Army



Supply Corps planners from the Naval Expeditionary Logistics Support Force discuss in-country combat support requirements for the mobilization of over 500 Naval Reservists from the force in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom II. From left to right are CDR Greg Lombardo, Deputy-Plans; CAPT Scott Pottinger, Force Chief of Staff; CAPT Jack Capella, Director-Mission Effectiveness; RADM Robert Percy, Force Commander; CAPT Mark Sakowski, Deputy Commander; CMDMC Tom Cramer, Force Master Chief; and CAPT Lyman Foster, Director-Plans.



Navy Reservists train to operate Army's heavy equipment at Ft. Eustis, Va. The Sailors of Naval Expeditionary Logistics Support Force Forward Alpha deployed in mid-February, to relieve Army personnel, in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

forces in a joint environment.

RADM Robert Percy III, SC, USNR, Commander of the NAVELSF provided some background on the mission. "The shore-based cargo handling capability operation in Kuwait and Iraq has been primarily an Army function until now, when they are scheduled to rotate. The Joints Chiefs of Staff reached out to all the services and asked if they could provide a portion of the shore-based logistics operation. The Navy's expeditionary shore-based logistics capability resides primarily within the Naval Reserve Force – and specifically within the Naval Expeditionary Logistics Support Force. The Navy came to NAVELSF and asked what we could do to help the Army in theater. Our mission is port, stevedoring, fuel, and mail operations. Supply support in general is what we do in a shore-based in-theater environment. So the Navy offered up our services and that is why



Construction Mechanic 2nd Class Tamara Gilreath, of Port Hueneme, Calif., conducts maintenance checks on an Army Truck. She is a member of Naval Expeditionary Logistics Support Force Forward Alpha and deployed in mid-February, in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom, to relieve Army personnel who have been deployed for one year.

we are deploying.”

RADM Percy discussed the force structure of NAVELSF, and how they were able to mobilize and deploy his Sailors so quickly. “The reason we have been able to put a quality group together on relatively short notice is due to the fact that this force is made up of battalions who are trained and ready to deploy.”

The battalions and companies deployed are listed in Figure 1.


Prior to the Sailors departing, RADM Percy told them, “You are citizen Sailors who are critical in the support of the country’s defense. Now you are stepping forward to fulfill the mission you have been preparing for. I am very proud of each and everyone one of you and know that you are trained to get the job done.”

Deputy Commander CAPT Mark Sakowski, SC, USNR, and his staff were responsible for executing the Mobilization Order. Sakowski said, “upon receiving the operational order to mobilize Sailors, the NAVELSF staff worked to identify the battalions that best fulfilled the requirements set forth

by the combatant commander. The next step was to develop a training curriculum to best create the scenarios that the Sailors would face in the AOR.”

His team couldn’t have done it by themselves, “Mobilizing over 500 Sailors to meet this requirement is why we are here, but strong-positive communication, coordination, and cooperation skills were critical success factors in our ability to meet the mission. The support of the entire supply community has truly been impressive. It’s at a time such as this where everyone person in the supply community comes together to support the war fighter. This is what it’s all about,” said Sakowski.

NAVELSF is the Navy command organized to deliver expeditionary logistics support using the capabilities of mobilized Naval Reserve Force Sailors and equipment. The NAVELSF mission includes operational support of the national military strategy that includes routine peacetime support, crisis response, humanitarian operations and combat service support missions throughout the world.

For more information contact CDR Tom Gresback, Naval Expeditionary Logistics Support Force Public Affairs Officer at (757) 256-1342, or e-mail thomas.gresback@navy.mil. 

Deploying NAVELSF Units

Navy Supply Support Battalion 1 Phoenix, Ariz.

Commanded by

CAPT Ray English, SC, USNR

With companies in:

Phoenix, Ariz.

Encino, Calif.

Ft. Worth, Texas

Lubbock Texas

San Diego, Calif.

Tucson, Ariz.

Sacramento, Calif.

Navy Cargo Handling Battalion 14 Port Hueneme, Calif.

Commanded by

CDR Millard Lewis Jr., SC, USNR

With companies in:

Port Hueneme, Calif.

Las Vegas, Nev.

Los Angeles, Calif.

Navy Cargo Handling Battalion 11 Jacksonville, Fla.

Commanded by

CDR Fred Boyles, SC, USNR

With companies in:

Jacksonville, Fla.

St. Petersburg, Fla.

Tampa, Fla.

Navy Cargo Handling Battalion 9 Columbus, Ohio

Commanded by

CDR Deborah Haven, SC, USNR

With companies in:

Columbus, Ohio

Cincinnati, Ohio; Huntington, W.V.

Youngstown, Ohio

Figure 1.